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ABSTRACT

The responses of elementary and secondary students drawn from two school districts, one with a student population that is primarily African American and the other with a student population that is primarily Caucasian, were analyzed to examine student perceptions of teacher influence. A total of 682 students (388 fifth graders and 294 eleventh graders) responded to the Perceptions of Teacher Influence Instrument. Results of a school level by racial dominance multivariate analysis indicated significant interaction ("p"<.003) and main effects ("p"<.001) on both variables. At the elementary level, students in schools with a predominantly African American population rated five variables at a higher level than did elementary students in schools with a predominantly Caucasian population. At the secondary level, students in schools with a predominantly African American population rated four variables at a lower level than did students in schools with a predominantly Caucasian population. Ratings of importance did not change much from elementary to secondary levels among students in schools with a predominantly African American population; however, changes in ratings from elementary to secondary levels were notable among students in schools with a predominantly Caucasian population. Two tables, four figures. (Contains 21 references.) (Author)

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Effects of Racial Dominance of School on Perceptions of Teacher Influence

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Running Head: School Perceptions

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Effects of Racial Dominance of School on

Perceptions of Teacher Influence

Abstract

The responses of elementary and secondary students drawn from two school districts, one with a student population which is primarily African American and the other with a student population which is primarily Caucasian, were analyzed to examine student perceptions of teacher influence. A total of 682 students responded to the Perceptions of Teacher Influence instrument, 388 fifth graders and 294 eleventh graders.

Results of a school level-by racial dominance multivariate analysis indicated significant interaction ($p < .003$) and main effects ($p < .001$) on both variables. At the elementary level, students in schools with a predominantly African American population rated five variables at a higher level than did elementary students in schools with a predominantly Caucasian population. At the secondary level, students in schools with a predominantly African American population rated four variables at a lower level than did students in schools with a predominantly Caucasian population. Ratings of importance did not change much from elementary to secondary levels among students in schools with a predominantly African American population; however, changes in ratings from elementary to secondary levels were notable among students in schools with a predominantly Caucasian population.

Effects of Racial Dominance of School on

Perceptions of Teacher Influence

Introduction

The value of obtaining and understanding student perceptions of the learning environment is receiving increasing attention (Babad, Bernieri, & Rosenthal, 1991; Phelan, Davidson, & Cao, 1992; Fraser & Fisher, 1982; Stodolsky, Salk, & Glaessner, 1991). Most studies have tended to focus on the predictive validity of students' perceptions, students' views of teacher expectancies, and students' perceptions of their learning in specific content areas. No studies have been located which sought to identify students' perceptions of teacher characteristics that help them experience academic success. Further, the extent to which racial dominance of a school setting may be related to student perceptions has not been determined.

The goal of this study was to explore the extent to which differences may exist in the perceptions of elementary and secondary students, in schools with student populations which are predominantly African American or predominantly Caucasian, regarding what a teacher must do to produce student success in the classroom. Specifically, the three research questions were:

1) Will elementary and secondary students differ in their perceptions of what a teacher must do to produce student success in the classroom?

2) Will students in schools with populations that are predominantly African American differ in their perceptions of what a teacher must do to produce student success in the classroom from students in schools with populations that are predominantly Caucasian?

3) Will there be an interaction between school level and racial dominance of the school concerning perceptions of what a teacher must do to produce student success in the classroom?

Methodology

Sample

The sample was drawn from two school districts located in southeast Mississippi and included a total of 682 elementary and secondary students.

One of the schools districts has a student population which is predominantly African American (74% African American, 26% Caucasian) and the other has a student population which is predominantly Caucasian (90% Caucasian, 10% African American). Both school districts employ African American and Caucasian teachers; approximately 50% of the teachers employed in the predominantly African American school district are African American, and approximately 90% of the teachers employed in the predominantly Caucasian school district are Caucasian.

The elementary students were in the fifth grade. All of the fifth-grade students (n = 241) in the predominantly Caucasian school district and fifth-grade students from two elementary schools (n = 147) in the predominantly African American school district were included in the sample. The secondary students were in the eleventh grade. All eleventh-grade students who were enrolled in second-period English classes in the predominantly Caucasian school district (n = 148) and in the predominantly African American school district (n = 146) were included in the sample.

Instrumentation

The student form of the Perceptions of Teacher Influence (PTI) was used to survey the sample. The instrument, which was developed by the authors, consists of a list of 16 teacher characteristics, each of which is rated by the respondent (using a six-point, Likert-scale ranging from essential to not essential) to indicate his/her belief about the degree of its importance in producing student success in elementary and secondary classrooms. The student form of the PTI, which is designed for use with students in the fifth-grade or higher, may be administered in a group setting; approximately 20-25 minutes are required to administer the instrument. When administering the student form of the PTI, it is recommended that the administrator explain that the words essential and not essential mean "necessary" and "not necessary," respectively. Also, the administrator should provide two or three sample items for discussion (and to insure that students understand how to use the Likert scale) prior to administering the instrument; sample items may include

the following:

To help students succeed, a classroom teacher must:

	Essential					Not Essential
(1) dress well	6	5	4	3	2	1
(2) give homework	6	5	4	3	2	1
(3) be friendly	6	5	4	3	2	1

When administering the PTI to elementary students, it is recommended that the administrator read aloud each item, give a brief example of what a teacher does who possesses the characteristic, and let students mark their responses to the item; the administrator continues these procedures until all items have been completed. For example, the administrator would read aloud the first item on the PTI and then might say: "This means that teachers must be able to answer any questions you have about a subject or be able to tell you how or where to find the answers to your questions. Circle the number at the end of this item that you think shows how necessary you think this is." When administering the PTI to secondary students, it is recommended that the administrator tell the students that if they are not sure what an item means, they should raise their hand so that the administrator can assist them.

Reponses on the PTI should be analyzed by item rather than as a group of items. A copy of the student form of the PTI is appended.

The list of 16 teacher characteristics contained in the student form of the PTI was compiled after considering several sources of information: items suggested by classroom teachers and school administrators; items listed on personnel reference forms used by school districts; items listed on teacher evaluation forms, such as the Mississippi Teacher Assessment Instrument (MTAI); areas included in standards for undergraduate and graduate teacher education programs set by professional organizations, such as the National Council of Teachers of Mathematics (NCTM), the International Reading Association, (IRA), the National Council for the Accreditation of Teacher Education (NCATE); and the findings of relevant research studies. The 16 items contained in the PTI and the specific references/sources of information

supporting inclusion of each item are as follows:

1. know the subject matter throughly (McEwan & Bull, 1991; Reynolds, 1992; Stein, Baxter, & Leinhardt, 1990)
2. manage (discipline) students effectively (Glasser,1990; Kagan, 1992; Reynolds, 1992)
3. motivate students (Harari & Covington, 1981; Reynolds, 1992; Stodolsky, Salk, & Glaessner, 1991)
4. appreciate cultural diversity among students (Cazden & Mehan, 1989; Grossman, 1992; Reynolds, 1992)
5. follow district/state curricular guides (Blase, 1990; Stodolsky, Salk, & Glaessner, 1991)
6. use appropriate written and spoken language (Pajares, 1992)
7. work cooperatively with school personnel (Blase, 1990; Leithwood & Montgomery, 1982)
8. complete assigned responsibilities on time (personnel reference forms; suggested by teachers and school administrators)
9. be willing to work beyond regular school hours (Blase, 1990)
10. foster positive self-esteem in students (suggested by teachers and school administrators)
11. have received good grades in college (personnel reference forms)
12. possess self-confidence (Brookhart & Freeman, 1992; Pajares, 1992; Reynolds, 1992)
13. match instruction to each student's abilities (Blase, 1990; Leithwood & Montgomery, 1982; McEwen & Bull, 1991; Reynolds, 1992; Stodolsky, Salk, & Glaessner, 1991)
14. present subject matter in an interesting way (Harari & Covington, 1981; McEwen & Bull, 1991; Stodolsky, Salk, & Glaessner, 1991)
15. teach students to think for themselves (Harari & Covington, 1981; Leithwood & Montgomery, 1982)
16. show enthusiasm when teaching (Aubrecht, Hanna, & Hoyt, 1986; Harari & Covington, 1981; Reynolds, 1992)

Procedures

After developing the student form of the PTI instrument, two sets of written directions for administering the PTI were developed: (a) a set to be used when administering the PTI to elementary students; and (b) a set to be used when administering the PTI to secondary students.

After receiving permission from two school superintendents to administer the PTI to fifth and eleventh-grade students enrolled in their school districts, the authors went to each of the schools on designated days and collected the data. Fifth-grade students responded to the PTI during their language arts classes. The eleventh-grade students responded to the PTI during second-period English classes, after assembling in the school auditorium. All student responses to the PTI were obtained in two days during mid-March, with one day each being used to collect data in each of the two school districts.

Results

Responses from a total of 636 PTI instruments were included in the analyses, after excluding instruments with missing information. Data were analyzed using a two-way school level (elementary, secondary) by racial dominance (predominantly African American, predominantly Caucasian) multivariate analysis. As shown in Table 1, both main effects were significant ($p < .001$) as was the school level by racial dominance interaction ($p < .003$). Based on the Wilkes Lambda test, one cannonical dimension related to the interaction was found to be significant ($p < .003$).

The variables important to this dimension were 1, 2, 3, 5, and 15, based on the structure coefficients. Four of the five variables appear to be related to the teacher's direct impact on students. The fifth variable was the weakest and dealt with following district/state guidelines.

The univariate results indicated significant school level by racial domiance interactions on the same variables [1 ($p < .001$), 2 ($p < .03$), 3 ($p < .03$), and 15 ($p < .01$)] as did the multivariate results. The univariate F-ratios, raw and standardized canonical coefficients, and structure

coefficients are presented in Table 2. Figures 1 - 4 display the interaction patterns for variables 1, 2, 3, and 15.

Discussion

Results of the analysis indicated school level by racial dominance interactions on five of the sixteen variables. The variables were: item 1 (know the subject matter thoroughly), item 2 (mangage/discipline students effectively), item 3 (motivate students), item 5 (follow district/state curricular guides), and item 15 (teach students to think for themselves). All of the variables, except variable 5, were related to the teacher's direct impact on students.

Examination of the interaction patterns revealed four findings. At the elementary level, students in schools with predominantly African American student populations rated variables 1 (know the subject matter thoroughly), 2 (manage/discipline students effectively), 3 (motivate students), and 15 (teach students to think for themselves) higher than did students in schools with predominantly Caucasian student populations. However, at the secondary level, variables 1, 2, and 3 were generally rated at the same level by students in schools with predominantly African American student populations and by students in schools with predominantly Caucasian student populations. Student ratings of the importance of the four variables did not differ much (mean differences ranged from .1 to .3 of a point) from elementary to secondary levels for schools with predominantly African American student populations. In contrast, student ratings of the importance of the four variables differed notably (mean differences ranged from .3 to .9 of a point) from elementary to secondary levels for schools with predominantly Caucasian student populations.

Collectively, these findings raise some interesting questions: Why do students, at the elementary level, in the predominantly African American school districts place a higher value on the four charactertistics than do those in the predominantly Caucasian school districts? Why do students in the predominantly Caucasian school districts place less value on the four characteristics at the elementary level than do students at the secondary

level? Through discussions of these findings with several African American and Caucasian classroom teachers, possible explanations for the findings have emerged.

The differences between the two groups of student responses at the elementary level, in general, may be attributed to differences in the beliefs and attitudes held by parents in each of the groups about specific aspects of education; usually, the beliefs and attitudes held by parents about education are reflected in their children's attitudes and school performance, especially during the elementary grades when children are more desirous of pleasing their parents. For instance, it may be that parents in the predominantly African American school districts have greater respect for teachers and the roles they play in helping their children become educated than do parents in the predominantly Caucasian school districts; it may be that teachers who "know the subject matter thoroughly" are highly valued by parents in predominantly African American school districts because teachers are viewed as communicating their knowledge to students, and knowledge is perceived as a prerequisite for obtaining positions of authority later in life.

Elementary students in the predominantly African American school districts may have rated student discipline at a higher level than did students in the predominantly Caucasian school districts because physical punishment may be used in their homes to maintain control and "to teach children a lesson," so they perceive that teachers must manage/discipline students in order for students to learn.

Concerning student motivation, it may be that elementary students in the predominantly African American school districts view the teacher's delivery of instruction as being more crucial to the learning process.

Concerning the importance of teaching students to think for themselves, it may be that elementary students in the predominantly African American school districts enter school feeling that they are not members of "the group" and that they must prove that they can think for themselves in order for "the group" to find them worthy of membership.

It was interesting to find that only at the secondary level did students in the predominantly Caucasian school districts rate the importance of the four variables at about the same level as had elementary students in the predominantly African American school districts. It is possible that parents of students in predominantly Caucasian school districts may not emphasize to their children the vital role played by teachers during the learning process until their children are at the secondary level and preparing for college entry.

In general, student responses to the PTI in both school districts became more alike by the secondary level. More research is needed to understand why groups of African American and Caucasian students may differ in their perceptions of the importance of selected teacher characteristics. It is recommended that future studies include student interviews as a follow-up to the collection of survey data.

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Table 1

Summary of MANOVA Analysis

Source	df	F	p
School Level (L)	16/617	9.67	<.001
Racial Dominance (R)	16/617	4.41	<.001
L x R	16/617	2.30	<.003

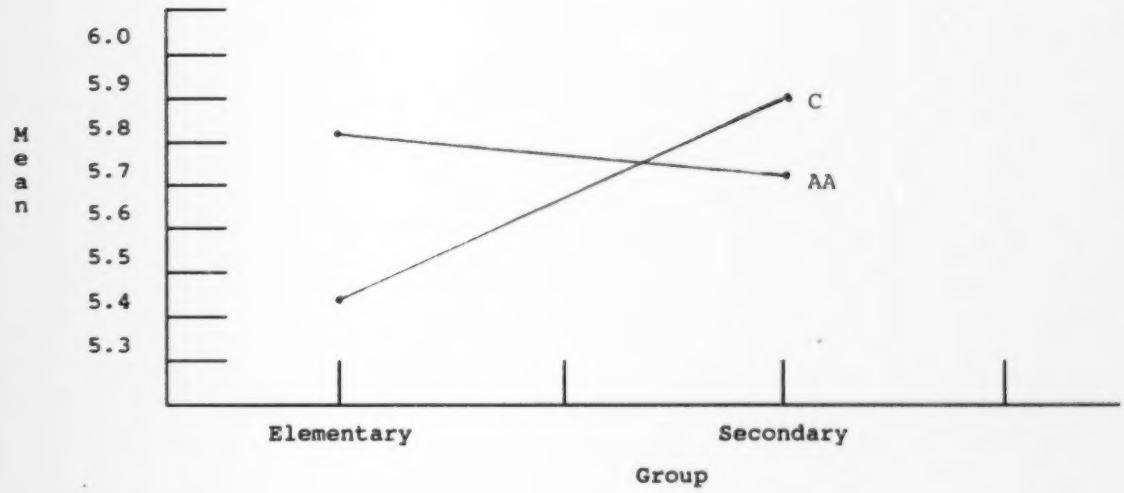
Table 2

Summary of the Multivariate and Univariate Statistics for the School Level by Racial Dominance Interactions

Variables	F	p	Coefficients		
			Raw	Standard	Structure
Item 1	13.70	.01	-.75	-.69	-.60
Item 2	5.31	.02	-.20	-.31	-.38
Item 3	4.85	.03	-.23	-.27	-.36
Item 4	.10	.76	.10	.13	.05
Item 5	3.80	.05	-.19	-.31	-.32
Item 6	.35	.56	.18	.28	.10
Item 7	1.15	.29	.22	.38	.17
Item 8	.15	.70	.15	.23	.06
Item 9	.11	.75	.05	.10	.05
Item 10	.25	.62	.02	.02	-.08
Item 11	.05	.83	.07	.12	.04
Item 12	.72	.40	-.01	-.02	-.14
Item 13	.01	.10	.08	.12	-.01
Item 14	.02	.88	.07	.09	-.02
Item 15	7.12	.01	-.27	-.37	-.43
Item 16	.01	.96	.13	.20	.01

Figure 1

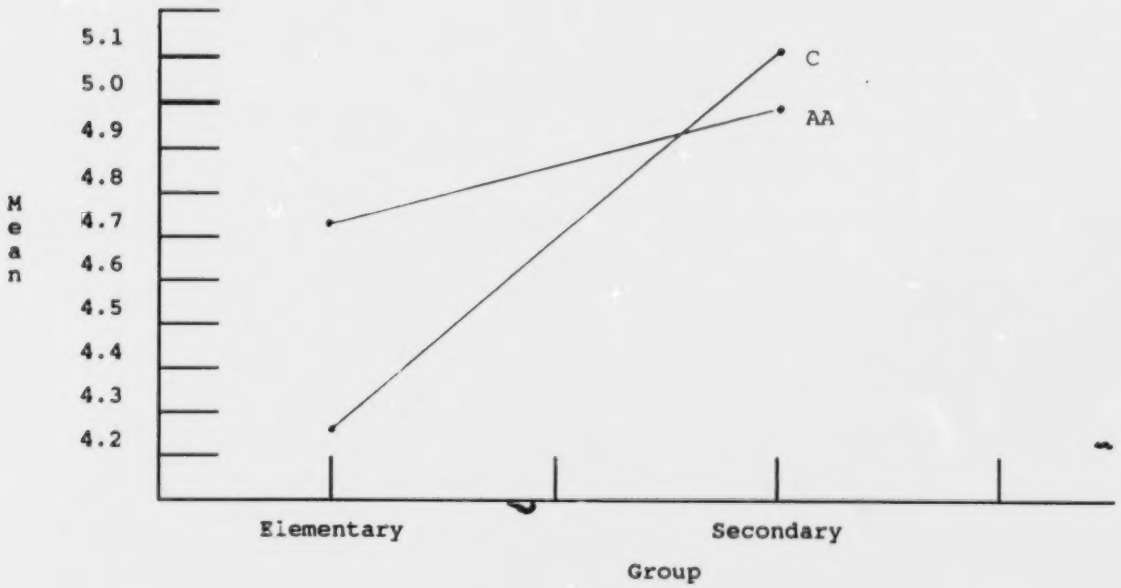
Variable 1: know the subject matter thoroughly.



CELL MEANS -	Elementary	Secondary
Caucasian:	5.42	5.88
African American:	5.81	5.71

Figure 2

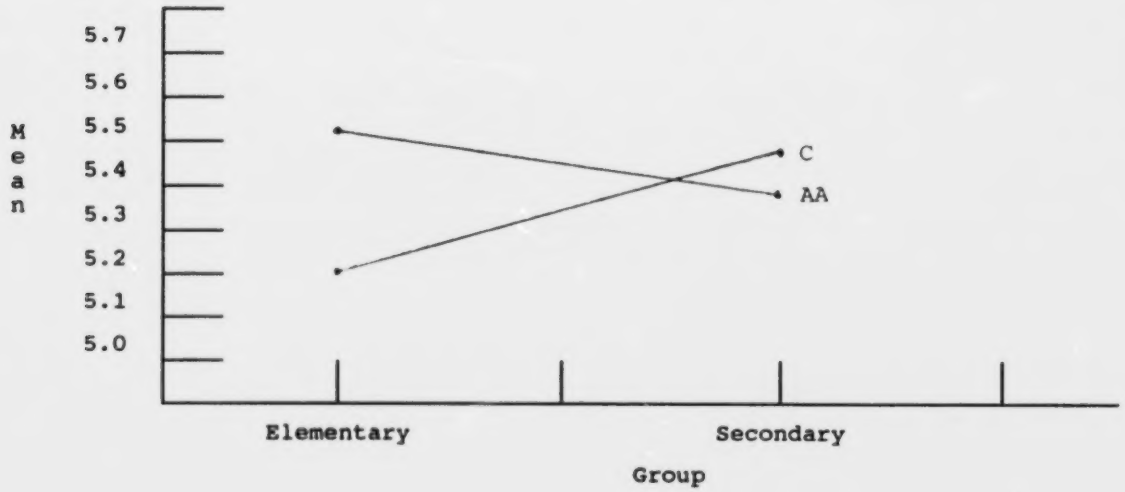
Variable 2: manage (discipline) students effectively.



CELL MEANS -	Elementary	Secondary
Caucasian:	4.24	5.06
African American:	4.72	4.97

Figure 3

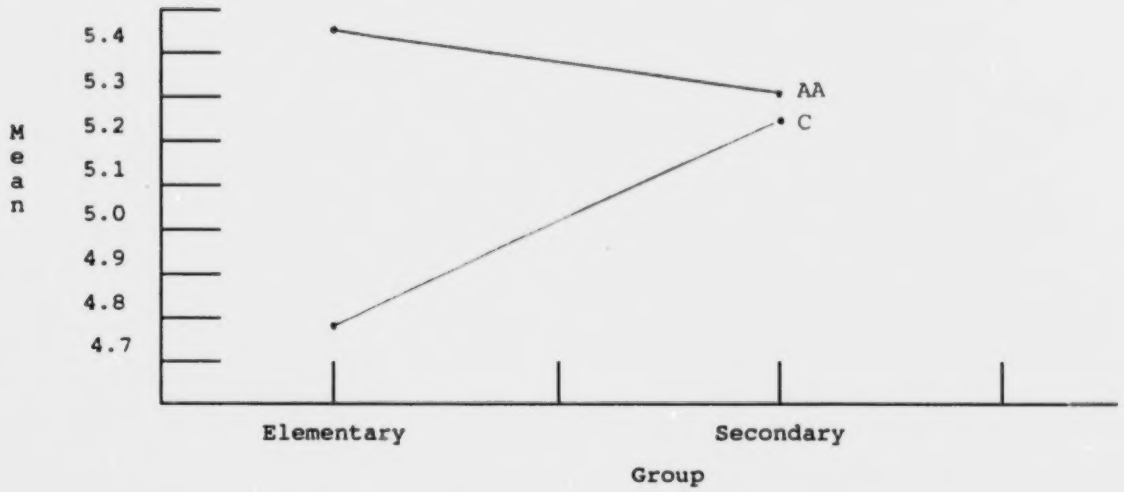
Variable 3: motivate students



CELL MEANS -	Elementary	Secondary
Caucasian:	5.20	5.46
African American:	5.52	5.36

Figure 4

Variable 15: teach students to think for themselves



CELL MEANS -	Elementary	Secondary
Caucasian:	4.78	5.23
African American:	5.44	5.30

Perceptions of Teacher Influence

DIRECTIONS: The items below describe characteristics of classroom teachers. Using a scale of 6(essential) to 1(not essential), circle the number to the right of each item that indicates your belief about the degree of its importance in producing student success in the classroom.

		Essential					Not Essential
To help students succeed, a classroom teacher must:							
1.	know the subject matter thoroughly	6	5	4	3	2	1
2.	manage (discipline) students effectively	6	5	4	3	2	1
3.	motivate students	6	5	4	3	2	1
4.	appreciate cultural diversity among students	6	5	4	3	2	1
5.	follow district/state curricular guides	6	5	4	3	2	1
6.	use appropriate written and spoken language	6	5	4	3	2	1
7.	work cooperatively with school personnel	6	5	4	3	2	1
8.	complete assigned responsibilities on time	6	5	4	3	2	1
9.	be willing to work beyond regular school hours	6	5	4	3	2	1
10.	foster positive self-esteem in students	6	5	4	3	2	1
11.	have received good grades in college	6	5	4	3	2	1
12.	possess self-confidence	6	5	4	3	2	1
13.	match instruction to each student's abilities	6	5	4	3	2	1
14.	present subject matter in an interesting way	6	5	4	3	2	1
15.	teach students to think for themselves	6	5	4	3	2	1
16.	show enthusiasm when teaching	6	5	4	3	2	1

THANK YOU FOR COMPLETING THIS SURVEY